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THE SINGER OF THE SEA

BY

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THE SINGER OF THE SEA.

In Memory of Celia Thaxter.

There is shadow on the sea!
And a murmur, and a moan,
In its muffled monotone,
Like a solemn threnody;
And the sea-gulls, on their white
Pinions, moving to and fro,

Are like phantoms, in their flight;
As they sweep from off the gray,
Misty headlands, far away,
And about the Beacon Light,
Wheel in circles, low and slow,
Wheel and circle, peer and cry,
As though seeking, restlessly,
Something vanished from their sight.
As though listening for the clear
Tones they never more may hear,—
Music, missing from the day,
Music, missing from the night,—
Through the years, that wax and wane,
That may never sound again.

She, who ever loved the sea,
Loved and voiced its minstrelsy,—
Sang its white-caps, tossing free,
Sang the ceaseless breaker-shocks,
Dashing, crashing, on the rocks,
Sang its moon-drawn tides, its speech,
Silver-soft, upon the beach,
Walks the margin's golden floor,—
Floats upon its breast no more.

Nay! how know we this to be?
That the forms we may not see,
Passed from mortal touch and ken,

Never come to earth again?
When this brittle house of clay
From the spirit breaks away,
Does the mind forego its will?
Is the voice's music still?
Do the hands forget their skill?
From that harp—great Homer's heart,—
Do no mighty numbers come?
Lost, divinest Raphael's art,
And the lips of Shakespeare dumb?
All the years of joy and pain
That are lived, but lived in vain;
Memory's graven page a blot,
Unrecorded and forgot!

Oh, believe, believe it not!
Man is God's incarnate thought:
Life, with all the gifts He gave,
All the wondrous powers He wrought,
Finds not ending at the grave.
Part, himself, of Deity,
Man, the spirit, cannot die.
"*In my Father's house there are*
Many mansions." Did Christ say
Whether near, or whether far?
It may be beside us still
Bide these forms invisible;
Or, if passed to realms away,
Beyond sight's remotest star,

Does that bind the soul to stay,—
Never, never, to retrace
The golden passage-ways of space?—
As a parted child might yearn
For the mother arms, and turn,
Fain to look on Earth's dear face.
'Twixt the heart that loves and her
Space could place no barrier:
Thought, that swifter is than light,
Leaps a universe in flight.

So I love to think, indeed,
That this singing spirit, freed
From her lesser, lower height—

Soaring to the Infinite,—
Turns with loving eyes, and smile,
Still unto her garden-isle;
Sees the tower's beacon-light,
Shining safely through the night;
Sees the white surf as it rolls
Round her treasured Isles of Shoals,—
Looking from that vaster sea,
Which we name Eternity.

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